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## THE WASHINGTON CALAMITY

APOLOGISTS FOR COLONEL AINSWORTH  
NOT TROUBLED BY FACTS."ECONOMY" EFFECTED BY HOLMANISM WHICH  
RESULTED IN ACTUAL EXPENSE TO  
THE GOVERNMENT.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.]

Washington, June 11.—There appears to be one other person in Washington besides Colonel Ainsworth who holds that the deathtrap in Tenth-street was a safe and suitable place in which to budge 500 clerks. He is the author of a Washington dispatch published in a New-York newspaper to-day in which it is declared that "all the talk about clerks being 'killed' in the building is rubbish," because the number employed on each floor averaged only 166. Twelve years ago Inspector-General Jones of the Army, after a thorough examination of the building, declared that "a proper record for the health of those employees of the Government would limit the number on the lower floor to eighty or ninety." Colonel Ainsworth's apologist and defender in the dispatch mentioned also asserts that "an entirely wrong impression is conveyed by the suggestion that the building was an 'inducement' one to work in. It consisted of three long open halls interrupted only by pillars, four lines of which ran through it from front to back. The height between floors was from twelve to fifteen feet. Large windows at each end permitted the passage of air, and the windows in the roof furnished ventilation when it was too cold to allow of the opening of the end windows."

In the report of Colonel Jones, which, as he remarked, was fully approved by one of the ablest sanitary authorities in the service of the Government—"who was understood to be Surgeon John S. Billings, of the army, who had been for years stationed in the building in charge of the great medical library belonging to the Government—that in that report the unsuitability and unhealthfulness of the building as a place for the employment of clerks were set forth as follows: "Owing to the inability properly to light it by means of windows and skylights, resort is had to gas. When the sun shines, twenty-six burners suffice; in cloudy days forty burners are needed."

At that time the average number of clerks kept from their work by sickness varied "from 6 to 7 per cent," and it is asserted that the percentage was as large last year as in any prior year. The reasons for this high rate of sickness, which, of course, entailed loss upon the Government, as well as misery and distress and often death upon the clerical force, were tersely set forth by Colonel Jones in these words:

"The air is extremely oppressive, the building being without ventilation, and the clerks in the upper floors are supplied with the vitiated hot air of the lower floor through a large central well hole. During the half of an hour allowed for lunch the windows are opened, and in this way a supply of fresh air secured, but toward the close of office hours the air becomes extremely oppressive, and then the water closets, which open by a narrow, unventilated passageway from the clerks' rooms, have no ventilation."

Colonel Jones also called attention to the apparent insecurity of the east wall of the building. It is pertinent to remark that the report of Colonel Jones found no place today in the newspaper which published the dispatch of Colonel Ainsworth's champion, who declares in terms that the building "was no more unsafe before its supports were attacked than any other solid building in the District," and calmly remarks that "if a building should remove or impair the supports of the War Department building it would fall just as the Tenth-street building fell." Ergo, the death-trap known as Ford's Theatre was as safe and sound a structure as the granite building which houses the State, War and Navy Departments is.

This is doubtless Colonel Ainsworth's view of the matter also. It should not be forgotten, however, that the work of the builder who "removed or impaired the supports" of the Tenth-street building was subject to the daily inspection of Colonel Ainsworth and his assistant, neither of whom possesses a scrap of knowledge to fit him for the intelligent performance of such duty.

Colonel Ainsworth's champion appears to think it necessary to the latter's defence to swear at Commissioners Parker and Ross, ex-Commissioner Douglas, Bishop Hurst, the Rev. Dr. Bartlett and other "more or less eminent citizens" who took part in the relief meeting held on Friday afternoon, and also at the men who escaped with their lives from the wrecked building. He says that "some lives were lost through excitement, and at least two persons were killed who were in no danger, but who were frightened by the noise and rush," but he is careful to omit to say that there was not a fire-escape on the building, and that the clerks on the second and third floors were penned between an abyss of death on one hand and a toppling wall on the other, and that the air was filled not only with the shrieks and groans of the wounded and dying, but with clouds of dust and lime, which made the place as dark as night—the place which he says was "not at all dangerous." Men less cool and more courageous than Colonel Ainsworth, for example, wonder only that so few lives were lost, and that so many persons escaped without serious injuries.

It is not surprising that one who would rush to the defence of officials whom ninety-nine hundredths of the people who have taken the trouble to examine the slaughter-pen believe to be guilty of inexcusable inefficiency and stupidity, even temporarily available for the purposes for which they are employed, should attempt to excuse Holmanism by asserting that "there has been no refusal to make such appropriations as were asked for the repair of this building." Holmanism is responsible for the occupancy by the Government of that and a dozen other unsafe buildings in the District of Columbia. The main cause of the insecurity of most of these buildings is the fact that their walls and floors are weighted with hundreds and thousands of tons of records and documents which these buildings were never designed to bear. For years Congress has been importuned to appropriate money for a suitable fireproof building in which to arrange and store such archives and records of the Government as are not required for constant use or frequent reference, but which it is necessary to preserve, and Holmanism in Congress has prevented the making of such an appropriation. A building like the one described would not only remove the dangers of destruction of the documents themselves by fire, but would greatly lessen the danger of life and limb to which thousands of Government officials and employees are now constantly exposed. Moreover, the building of such a structure would be a measure of wise economy.

Holmanism also insists that the Government, which pays no taxes or interest on its real estate, shall pay the taxes and interest, as well as a round percentage of profit, to private owners of real estate which it occupies in the city of Washington. The amount thus paid in rentals here by the Government this year is about \$180,000. At the rate of 3 per cent a year this sum represents a capital of \$6,000,000, or at least double the amount that would be required to build substantial, fireproof and suitable buildings sufficient to accommodate all the offices and employees now housed in rented buildings, which are inconvenient, unhealthy and unsafe, and upon which thousands upon thousands of dollars of public money have been expended year after year to make them even temporarily available for the purposes for which they are used, and for which they were never designed. Holmanism stolidly refuses to take note of these facts and continues, year after year, to vote more money for such objects as the

(Continued on Second Page.)

## OVERCOME BY SMOKE.

FIREMEN HAVE A HARD FIGHT WITH AN  
EAST SIDE BLAZE.A BURNING STORAGE WAREHOUSE FILLS THE  
AIR WITH PUNISHT OODS—DAMAGE  
ABOUT \$150,000.

Chief Bonner and his men had a long and hard fight yesterday with one of the hottest fires they have encountered in many months. The blaze was in the old five-story brick building Nos. 250 and 252 south-st., with a frontage of 100 feet and running back seventy-five feet through Clinton to Water-st. The place is owned and run as a storage warehouse by George R. Hobbs, who inherited the business from his father, James H., the firm title being J. H. Hobbs & Son. In the building was stored an assortment of merchandise consisting of tobacco, coffee, pepper, tea, cotton, natum, matting and printing paper, owned by about twenty different firms.

How or where the fire originated is unknown. The house employed no day watchmen and the building was closed when at half past 4 o'clock, some sailors and longshoremen loitering on the sidewalk facing the building saw smoke rising from the windows on the top floor at the northeast corner. They ran to the firebox on the opposite corner, and as they crossed the street the cracking of glass in the upper windows showed that the fire inside had reached the roof. The tongues of flame were visible around the corners of the iron shutters that covered every window on the lower floors, and the shutters were red hot.

The close proximity of the big coast steamboats and the great Driggs storage-house, to say nothing of the inflammable material stored in the building, obliged the firemen to send out three alarms, and Chief Bonner was presently in command and directing the operations.

The iron shutters were the worst of all the obstacles the firemen had to meet. For nearly an hour the hook-and-ladder men battled with hatched axes at these shutters in the endeavor to force an opening. As the shutters were forced open one by one water was poured through the windows, and after a time about thirty streams were playing in the upper part of the building, and a cloud of steam and smoke combining the elements of tobacco, snuff and pepper, burst from the roof and filled the streets, choking and blinding everybody it reached.

Mr. Bonner, in the hope of getting a more effective play on the flames, had sent a number of men to the roof to force an opening. But the smoke was the stronger. Bravely the men battled to get their lines in position, until at last, when the smoke and steam had cleared away, the ladders to the ground to save their lives. No one, however, suffered any serious injury except one man attached to Engine No. 17, who after being treated by an ambulance surgeon from Governor Hospital was taken back to the station.

While the firemen were hard at work powerful reinforcements reached the spot. The New-Yorker, the Haverford and the police ladders were sent to the roof of the building.

From the New-Yorker came five big streams—one of which shot above the roof of the building and pouring almost perpendicularly right down into the heart of the flames. The Haverford contributed the same amount, and the Police ladders sent five 2 1/2 inch streams. Chief Bonner could say that the fire was under control. Then it was known that the fire had spread to the roof of the building, and that the firemen had to be called to the front of the building.

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## COOLER WEATHER COMING.

YESTERDAY'S MEAN TEMPERATURE THE  
HIGHEST THIS SEASON.A SLIGHT SHOWER BROUGHT SOME RELIEF IN  
THE EVENING—A STORM ON ITS WAY.

EASTWARD.

The hottest day of the year up to date came yesterday. The highest temperature recorded by the Weather Bureau was not so high as was registered the first of last week, but the official mean temperature for the day was highest yesterday, and the street thermometers testified that the record for 1893 was broken.

Mr. Dunn, who enjoys the official temperature on the top of the Equitable Building, which is swept by all the breezes that blow, said that it was not so fearfully hot. Several cities were worse off than New-York, and as for South Dakota, the hottest place in the United States yesterday, where the mercury climbed to 102 degrees in the shade—why, New-York was a refrigerator compared to it. The highest official temperature recorded for this city was 88 degrees, between 3 and 4 p. m.; the lowest was 71 degrees at 6 a. m.; the mean temperature was about 80 degrees.

About one one-hundredth of an inch of rain fell during the evening. The shower was a local one, and soon passed off. The official indications are that to-day will be fair and cooler. A storm was central over the Dakotas last evening. It was moving east and bringing cool weather with it.

Those who had to live in the unofficial atmosphere of the streets yesterday found living exceedingly uncomfortable. The nearly vertical rays of the sun pouring upon the pavements and the walls of the houses during the middle of the day turned them into storehouses of the solar heat and kept the temperature rising long after the shadows had fallen across the streets.

The breeze which fanned the official thermometer was turned aside by the tall buildings, and only faint gusts were to be felt below. The official temperature was that in which people had to live, and that was extremely high. The early morning air was recorded as 68 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was 72 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was 76 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was 80 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was 84 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was 88 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was 84 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was 80 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was 76 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was 72 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was 68 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was 64 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was 60 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was 56 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was 52 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was 48 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was 44 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was 40 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was 36 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was 32 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was 28 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was 24 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was 20 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was 16 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was 12 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was 8 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was 4 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was 0 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -4 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -8 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -12 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -16 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -20 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -24 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -28 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -32 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -36 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -40 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -44 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -48 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -52 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -56 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -60 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -64 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -68 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -72 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -76 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -80 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -84 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -88 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -92 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -96 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -100 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -104 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -108 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -112 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -116 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -120 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -124 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -128 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -132 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -136 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -140 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -144 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -148 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -152 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -156 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -160 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -164 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -168 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -172 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -176 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -180 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -184 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -188 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -192 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -196 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -200 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -204 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -208 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -212 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -216 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -220 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -224 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -228 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -232 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -236 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -240 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -244 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -248 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -252 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -256 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -260 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -264 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -268 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -272 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -276 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -280 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -284 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -288 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -292 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -296 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -300 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -304 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -308 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -312 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -316 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -320 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -324 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -328 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -332 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -336 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -340 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -344 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -348 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -352 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -356 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -360 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -364 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -368 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -372 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -376 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -380 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -384 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -388 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -392 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -396 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -400 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -404 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -408 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -412 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -416 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -420 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -424 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -428 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -432 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -436 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -440 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -444 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -448 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -452 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -456 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -460 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -464 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -468 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -472 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -476 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -480 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -484 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -488 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -492 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -496 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -500 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -504 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -508 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -512 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -516 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -520 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -524 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -528 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -532 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -536 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -540 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -544 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -548 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -552 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -556 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -560 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -564 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -568 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -572 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -576 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -580 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -584 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -588 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -592 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -596 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -600 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -604 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -608 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -612 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -616 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -620 degrees; at 1 p. m. it was -624 degrees; at 3 p. m. it was -628 degrees; at 5 p. m. it was -632 degrees; at 7 p. m. it was -636 degrees; at 9 p. m. it was -640 degrees; at 11 p. m. it was -644 degrees; at 1 a. m. it was -648 degrees; at 3 a. m. it was -652 degrees; at 5 a. m. it was -656 degrees; at 7 a. m. it was -660 degrees; at 9 a. m. it was -664 degrees; at 11 a. m. it was -6